Warrior

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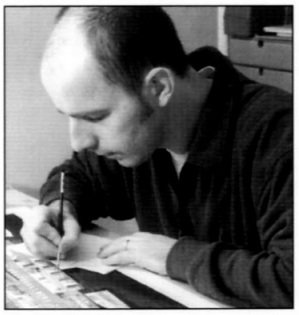
French Resistance Fighter

France's Secret Army

Terry Crowdy • Illustrated by Steve Noon

TERRY CROWDY has long been fascinated by many aspects of military history and takes great pleasure delving into forgotten historical sources and seeking information that has eluded others. The author of a number of articles and books, Terry lives in Kent, UK.



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Abbreviations

AS	*Armée Secrète*
BCRA	*Bureau Central de Renseignements et d'Action*
CCZN	*Comité de Coordination de Zone Nord*
CDLL	*Ceux de la Libération*
CDLR	*Ceux de la Résistance*
CE	*commissaire aux effectifs*
CFLN	*Comité Français de la Libération Nationale*
CMN	*Comité Militaire National*
CMR	*Comité Militaire Régional*
CMRI	*Comité Militaire Inter-Régional*
CMZ	*Comité Militaire de Zone Sud*
CND	*Confrérie de Notre Dame*
CNR	*Couseil National de la Résistance*
CO	*commissaire aux operations*
COMAC	*Comité Militaire d'Action*
CT	*commissaire technique*
EMFFI	*État Major des Forces Françaises de l'Intérieur*
FFI	*Forces Françaises de l'Intérieur*
FN	*Front National*
FTPF/FTP	*Francs-Tireurs et Partisans Français*
MOI	*Main d'Oeuvre Immigrée*
MUR	*Mouvements Unis de Résistance*
OCM	*Organisation Civile et Militaire*
OG	*Operational Group*
ORA	*Organisation de Résistance de l'Armée*
OS	*Organisation Spéciale*
OSS	Office of Strategic Services
PCF	*Parti Communiste Français*
ROP	*Recrutement, Organisation, Propagande*
SFHQ	Special Force Headquarters
SHAEF	Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force
SOE	Special Operations Executive
STO	*Service du Travail Obligatoire*
UNE	*Union Nacional Espanola*

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FRENCH RESISTANCE FIGHTER: FRANCE'S SECRET ARMY

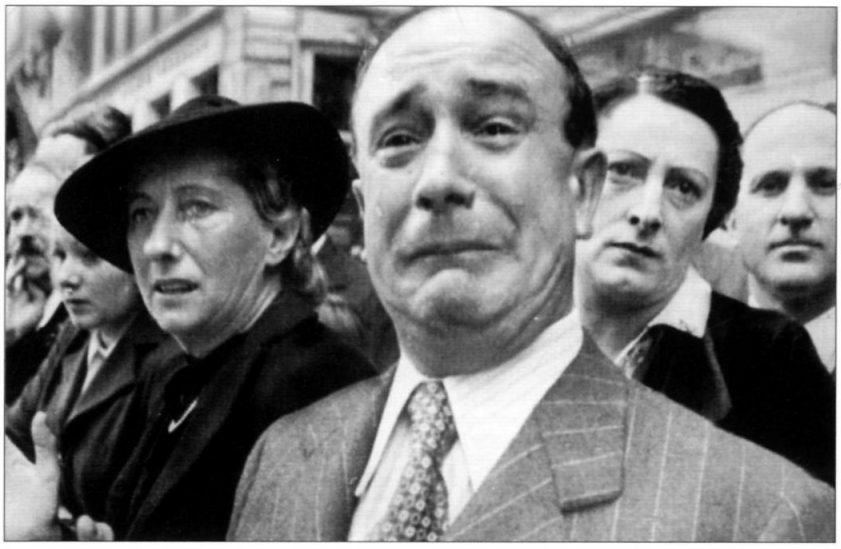
INTRODUCTION

On 10 May 1940 the Nazi Blitzkrieg was unleashed on Western Europe. By the end of the month, Holland and Belgium were overrun and a shattered British Army could do nothing but extricate itself from the beaches of Dunkirk. Two weeks into June and the Germans were in Paris. With millions of refugees on the road, 90,000 French soldiers dead and 1.8 million more in captivity, on 17 June France's Great War hero, Marshal Pétain, asked for an armistice.

Hitler humiliated France. Mirroring the fate of the German Army in 1918, the French 'Armistice Army' was limited to 100,000 men. France was partitioned. The disputed region of Alsace-Lorraine was placed under German civil administration, while the *départements* of Pas-de-Calais and Nord came under the authority of occupied Belgium. The remainder of France was split into two zones. The northern zone, which included the entire Channel and Atlantic coastline, was occupied by the Germans. The southern zone was self-governed by the French, albeit with heavy strings attached.

Unoccupied France was governed from the town of Vichy. Initially almost everyone rallied round the 84-year-old Pétain, who became head of state. The old marshal was identified with the heroic defence of Verdun in 1916 and people believed he would again see them through difficult times. They hoped Pétain was playing the Germans at a double game and was secretly planning the liberation of France. A very effective propaganda campaign blamed defeat on British self-interest. This idea was strongly reinforced when Britain attacked the French Navy at Mers-el-Kébir to prevent it falling into German hands – almost 1,300 French sailors were killed by the British. Few heard the BBC broadcast made by General Charles de Gaulle on 18 June 1940. Self-proclaimed chief of the 'Free French' in London, de Gaulle urged Frenchmen not to lose hope. His broadcast closed defiantly: 'whatever happens, the flame of French Resistance must not and will not be extinguished.' Many thought him a traitor. Pétain sentenced de Gaulle and his followers to death in their absence.

Freedom fighters to some, terrorists and gangsters to others; two dusty maquisards armed with American submachine guns. Allied Supreme Command (SHAEF) was not sure what to make of the Resistance before the D-Day landings, fearing it would melt away when the fighting started. However, its performance in cutting German transport and communication networks and sapping enemy reserves and morale led Allied commander Eisenhower to declare it worth 15 divisions of infantry. (IWM KY34412)



The shock of defeat. As German soldiers march into Paris on 14 June 1940, a Frenchman weeps among a crowd of shocked onlookers. Although the vast majority of the French wanted nothing more than to go about their daily routines, it became increasingly difficult not to choose between collaboration and resistance. (NARA 535896)

Vichy France became a repressive, anti-democratic society. Individuals were victimized because of left-wing beliefs and Freemasonry was prohibited. France played its part in the Holocaust too. Between March 1942 and July 1944, almost 76,000 Jews were deported from France to the death camps. In May 1942 the Nazis demanded 250,000 French workers for service in Germany. Known as *la relève* (the relief), this voluntary scheme failed and was replaced in February 1943 by the *Service du Travail Obligatoire* (Compulsory Work Service; STO) – the forced conscription of workers. More than 600,000 French civilians were deported to work in Nazi industry. If things were not bad enough, in response to Allied successes in the Mediterranean, the Nazis crossed the line of demarcation and occupied the southern zone in November 1942, sweeping away the last pretences of French sovereignty. The Vichy army was disarmed and replaced by a 30,000-strong secret police force known as the *Milice* (Militia). An ugly stain on French history, the *Milice* was led by Joseph Darnand, who took a personal oath of loyalty to Hitler and received the rank of Sturmbannführer in Himmler's SS.

Against this miserable backdrop, of which the above is merely a snapshot, acts of resistance began to emerge. Starved of news, clandestine newspapers and journals began to appear, reporting the stories that Nazi propagandists suppressed. From clandestine press to direct action, the urge to take up arms followed. As young men and women fled into the hills to avoid compulsory service in Germany, the ranks of the maquis

STO *réfractaires* in the summer of 1943. Although the Germans were at pains to present it as anything but, the STO was little other than slave labour. By deporting these young men to Germany, the Reich only succeeded in forcing people to join the Resistance when they otherwise might not have done. (IWM MH11169)

A maquis member in the Limousin region duplicating clandestine leaflets. The written word was a powerful tool of the Resistance in promoting free speech, news from the Allies and pointing out German crimes. Groups like the *Francs-Tireurs et Partisans Français* (FTP) also produced their own training manuals using printing presses and duplicators like the one shown here. (IWM MH11132)

swelled by the spring of 1944. Living as outlaws, poorly armed, mostly without uniforms and always terminally short of cigarettes, the men and women of the Resistance nevertheless played an effective part in their own liberation.

CHRONOLOGY

1939	
1 September	German invasion of Poland
3 September	Britain and France declare war on Germany
1940	
10 May	German offensive opens in the West
14 May	German Army breaks through French lines at Sedan
27 May	Capitulation of Belgian Army
28 May–3	Dunkirk evacuation
6 June	Germans break through French lines on the Somme
10 June	French government moves to Bordeaux
14 June	Paris occupied by the Germans
16 June	Marshal Pétain becomes Prime Minister
17 June	Pétain requests an armistice; General de Gaulle arrives in London
18 June	Appeal for Resistance by de Gaulle on the BBC
2 July	Pétain becomes head of state of new government at Vichy
3 July	English fleet attacks French Navy at Mers-el-Kébir
19 July	Formation of Special Operations Executive (SOE)
2 August	De Gaulle is sentenced to death by Pétain
11 November	Student protest on the Champs-Élysées
1941	
15 May	Communist resistance movement *Front National* (National Front; NF) is created
22 June	Beginning of German offensive against USSR
21 August	First German officer assassinated by a French communist
8 October	Free French secret service agency the *Bureau Central de Renseignements et d'Action* (Central Office for Intelligence and Action; BCRA) is formed

20 October	Jean Moulin reaches London to lobby for support for the Resistance
1 November	Henri Frenay founds the *Combat* movement
7 December	Japan attacks Pearl Harbor
11 December	Germany declares war on United States

1942

2 January	Jean Moulin is parachuted into southern zone as de Gaulle's representative
27 March	First deportation of French Jews to Auschwitz
1 May	Patriotic demonstrations throughout the southern zone
29 May	French Jews forced to wear the yellow star in Occupied Zone
22 June	Vichy Prime Minister Pierre Laval introduces *la relève*. For every three workers sent to Germany, one prisoner of war is returned
14 July	Demonstrations in the southern zone mark 'Bastille Day'
19 August	Allied raid on Dieppe fails with heavy losses
11 November	Germans invade Unoccupied Zone and disarm the Armistice Army
27 November	Vichy fleet scuttles its ships in Toulon
1 December	General Frère founds the *Organisation de Résistance de l'Armée* (Army Resistance Organization; ORA)

1943

26 January	Creation of the *Mouvements Unis de Résistance* (United Resistance Movements; MUR)
30 January	Creation of the *Milice*
2 February	German Army at Stalingrad surrenders
16 February	Mobilization of men for the STO
12 May	Rommel's Afrika Korps capitulates in Tunisia
27 May	Foundation of *Conseil National de la Résistance* (National Council of the Resistance; CNR)
30 May	De Gaulle arrives in Algeria
3 June	The *Comité Français de la Libération Nationale* (French National Liberation Committee; CFLN) is formed
9 June	General Delestraint arrested in Paris and sent to Dachau
21 June	Jean Moulin arrested by Klaus Barbie
5 September	Corsica liberated

1944

1 February	Creation of the *Forces Françaises de l'Intérieur* (French Forces of the Interior; FFI)
23 March	General Koenig is appointed commander-in-chief of the FFI
20 April	German troops attack the Vercors maquis
5 June	The Resistance receives messages via the BBC announcing the forthcoming invasion
6 June	D-Day: Allies land in Normandy
10 June	Germans massacre 642 civilian victims at Oradour-sur-Glane
14 June	De Gaulle lands in Normandy
15 August	Operation *Anvil* – Allied landings in Provence
19 August	Beginning of Paris uprising
25 August	Liberation of Paris
26 August	De Gaulle on the Champs-Élysées
31 August	Provisional French government transfers from Algeria to Paris
3 September	Lyons is liberated
7 September	Pétain and Laval go to Germany
1 October	Allies reach German border
23 November	Liberation of Strasbourg

1945

26 April	Pétain returns to France
7 May	The war ends in Europe
23 July–14 August	Trial of Pétain. The marshal is sentenced to death, but then pardoned by de Gaulle

MOTIVATIONS FOR RESISTANCE

The French Resistance remains a controversial subject in France. For

joining the Resistance. On 1 December 1942 the *Organisation de Résistance de l'Armée* (Army Resistance Organization; ORA) was formed by General Aubert Frère. Although Frère was arrested by the Gestapo in June 1943, ORA survived him and contributed to the liberation of France in 1944. It is important to know that ORA lent its support to a rival of de Gaulle, General Henri Giraud, who after escaping from captivity in Germany set up base in Algeria. It is also important to know that Giraud was preferred by the United States as a leader of the Free French. It is well known that President Roosevelt loathed Charles de Gaulle.

Perhaps the most active component in the army Resistance was its intelligence service – the *Deuxième Bureau*. The agency set up a commercial business in Lyons that served as a front for its German Section. Ignoring the terms of the armistice, this section continued to gather intelligence on Germany, which was passed to the British. The *Bureaux de Menées Antinationales* (Office of Anti-national Conspiracies) provided cover for the activities of the counter-espionage section, which continued to detect and arrest German agents.

One should never forget that throughout the occupation, the French intelligence service preserved the secret of how the German *Enigma* code had been broken. Before the war Polish intelligence had broken the *Enigma* and even built its own versions of the German enciphering machine. When the Germans made changes to *Enigma*, the Poles let Britain and France into their secret. After the Nazi invasion in 1939, the Polish team went to France to carry on their work and when France fell in 1940 they moved to the southern zone and became known as the Cadix team. Although a number of the group were captured, tortured and sent to concentration camps, none of them betrayed the *Enigma* secret.

Some intelligence officers attained high rank in the Resistance. Captain Henri Frenay formed *Combat*, one of the largest resistance movements, and then became a member of de Gaulle's provisional government. In the Occupied Zone, the *Deuxième Bureau*'s Lieutenant-Colonel Alfred Touny took command of the *Organisation Civile et Militaire* (Civil and Military Organization; OCM) after the arrest of its chief in December 1941. As its title suggests, the OCM was largely made up of reserve officers and civil servants and was thus well staffed to produce a steady stream of intelligence from the Occupied Zone to de Gaulle's Free French intelligence service in London.

This service was formed in October 1941 and was called the *Bureau Central de Renseignements et d'Action* (Central Office for Intelligence and Action; BCRA). It was commanded by André Dewavrin who used the *nom-de-guerre* 'Colonel Passy'. A former *Deuxième Bureau* officer, Passy ran the BCRA in an office in Duke Street, London. By 1944 the BCRA was producing an information sheet twice a day for the Allied intelligence community. One of Passy's key subordinates, Colonel Rémy, formed an important network in France called *Confrérie de Notre Dame* (Brotherhood of Notre Dame; CND). This organization produced a mass of pictures and maps used by the invasion planners. It also procured highly detailed construction plans of German coastal defences, the so-called 'Atlantic Wall'.

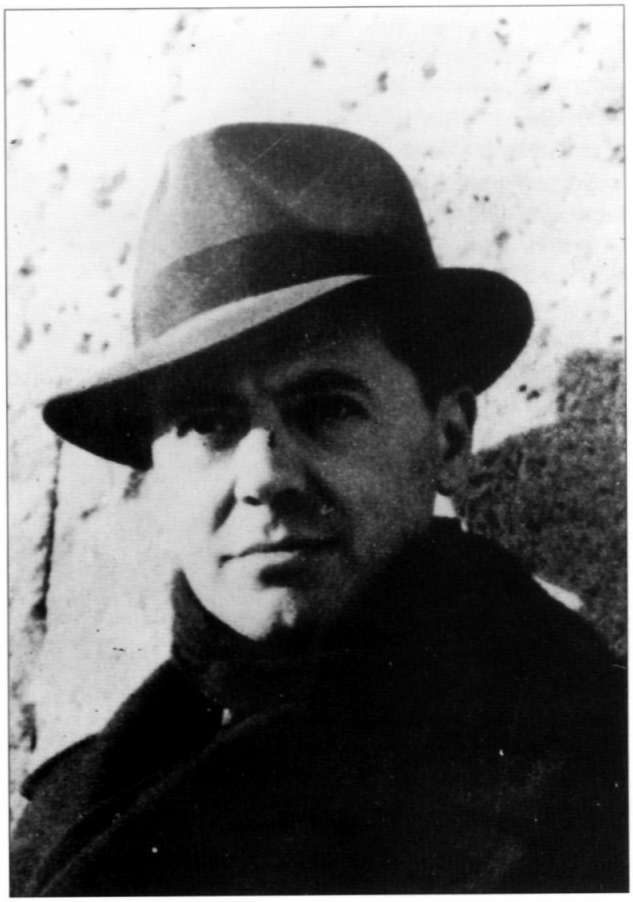
Allied to the BCRA – although often in competition with it – were the British secret services. Here the importance of the Allied secret services

as a common denominator between the various Resistance movements should be clearly stated. Although it is perhaps unfashionable in France to admit it, without the direct intervention of the British and, later, the Americans, Resistance in France would have remained underfunded, poorly armed, rudderless and to a large degree parochial in scope.

On 19 July 1940 the British formed the SOE, a secret force that dropped agents behind enemy lines to stir up trouble, conduct sabotage, or, in Churchill's words, 'set Europe ablaze'. It is probably true to say that even if indigenous Resistance groups had not formed spontaneously of their own accord, the British would have created them. SOE's 'F' section was responsible for operations in France and was commanded by Maurice Buckmaster. Between March 1941 and September 1942, F Section alone included over 90 agent networks, or 'circuits' as they were known. The membership of these groups ranged from the singular (the *Tutor* circuit consisted of one man who was active for just a week) to the tens of thousands. Of these groups around 50 were still in action when reached by Allied soldiers in 1944, or when they ousted the Germans themselves – as in the case of the *Wheelwright* circuit, which liberated Toulouse. As support for de Gaulle began to increase in the Resistance, a separate Gaullist French section was formed under the initials 'FR'. After 1942 the SOE was joined by the American Office of Strategic Services (OSS), the forerunner of the modern Central Intelligence Agency (CIA).

It is also important to underline how much of the Resistance in France was not French at all. Resistance to Nazi occupation was a European phenomenon and not unique to France. In 1939 there were at least 2.5 million foreigners in France, mostly economic migrants who had come to take advantage of the labour shortage after World War I. Many of these had their own reasons for hating the Nazis. In the north of France, large numbers of Polish coal miners were active in the Resistance.

Perhaps as many as 60,000 Spanish exiles fought alongside the French Resistance, some forming their own groups, including the *Union*



Credited with unifying the internal Resistance under de Gaulle's Free French banner, Jean Moulin is one of the great French heroes of World War II. Apparently he wore the scarf to cover the scars of his suicide attempt when first held in captivity by the Germans. In 1940 they had arrested him after he refused to sign a false statement that Senegalese troops had committed an atrocity against French civilians. (IWM MH11145)

Similar groups began to spring up across France and it was a natural evolution for them to merge or at least cooperate when their interests converged. The chief promoter of unification was Jean Moulin, the pre-war government prefect at Chartres. Moulin identified three main Resistance groups in the southern zone. Although not seeing eye-to-eye on everything, these three groups shared many of the same goals and all of the same problems – namely a lack of money, no means of communicating with London and a dearth of equipment. Moulin decided to visit de Gaulle and lobby him on these issues.

Moulin reached Lisbon on 12 September 1941 and was taken by the British to London where he met de Gaulle on 25 October. De Gaulle agreed to help Moulin and made him his representative in France. As much as the Resistance needed help from London, de Gaulle needed the Resistance. If de Gaulle was recognized by the internal Resistance, it would lend him real political power with the Allied leadership. On the night of 2 January 1942, Moulin parachuted back into France with the aim of unifying the Resistance in de Gaulle's name.

Although much celebrated since, this mission was in fact a disaster waiting to happen. For secret organizations to survive they must decentralize and limit contact with each other. Although understanding the need to show unity, and accepting that de Gaulle was probably the best placed leadership candidate, many important resisters felt that de Gaulle, a military man, misunderstood the nature of the Resistance. The majority of civilians in the Resistance did not see themselves as soldiers, but, according to Frenay, were more like the *sans culottes* of the French Revolution – in other words, citizens in arms. However, to de Gaulle and his cohorts, the Resistance was seen as an embryonic military force, needing commanders, structures and all the trappings of a regular army.

As the FTP chief Charles Tillon wrote, the BCRA only appeared interested in drawing up lists of members, 'Yes, the Gaullist high command accounted for *résistants* like a collection of lead soldiers', he complained. This rejection of regimentation was shared by the *Libération* group's Emmanuel d'Astier de la Vigerie. When he met the BCRA chief, d'Astier was shown the BCRA's index system of known Resistance members. It comprised thousands of cards enclosed in huge metal filing cabinets, each detailing what was known about resisters and collaborators alike – very similar, d'Astier thought, to a police file.

The Secret Army

After a year of negotiation, the leaderships of the three main southern movements (*Combat*, *Franc-Tireur* and *Libération*) amalgamated on 26

January 1943 to form the *Mouvements Unis de Résistance* (United Resistance Movements; MUR – lit. wall). In addition to recognizing de Gaulle as leader, they agreed to merge their paramilitary branches to form the *Armée Secrète* (Secret Army; AS), which was placed under the independent command of General Delestraint (codename: *Vidal*), a former army commander of 1940.

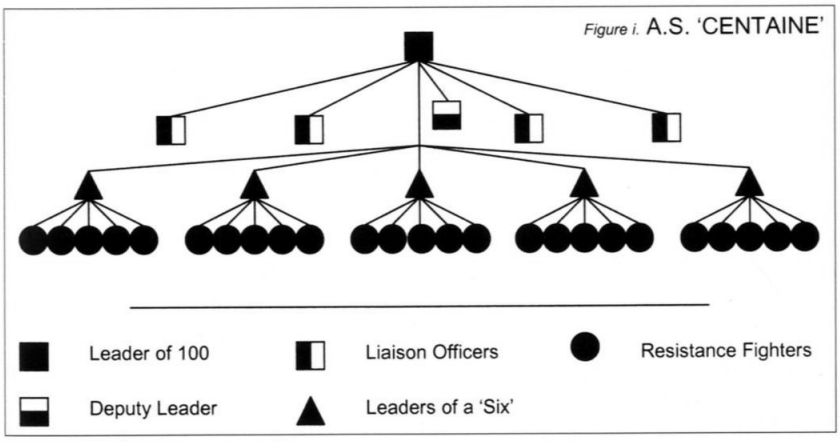
Perhaps the biggest question facing the AS was how to incorporate the growing number of maquisards. Usually each no more than a dozen strong, maquis groups had been gathering in the Hautes-Alpes, the Cévennes, the Montagne Noire, Puy-de-Dôme and Corrèze. Frenay recalled:

> We established contact with them through our departmental and regional chiefs. Usually these little maquis voluntarily followed our instructions, in return for which they expected food, arms and ammunition... It seemed to me that these groups, which were now hiding out all over the French mountain country, might well be transformed into an awesome combat weapon. The *maquisards* were all young, all volunteers, all itching for action... It was up to us to organize them and give them a sense of their role in the struggle.

By 1 October 1943, the AS was a potent force with 241,350 members, although mostly unarmed. The AS followed the cell structure already used by *Combat*. The basic tactical group would be a *sixaines* (five men and a leader). Five *sixaines* would form a *trentaine* (thirty) under the command of a leader. Three *trentaines* would unite under a commander and a four-man staff (one deputy, four liaison agents) forming a 100-man unit or *centaine* (hundred – see Figure i).

Although some detachments – the *Groupes Francs* – would take immediate action, the bulk of the AS would remain living at home or in the maquis until called for on *Jour J* (D-Day). There was a genuine fear that if the AS attempted anything large before the Allied landings it would be quickly defeated by the Wehrmacht, as it had no heavy equipment. Instead the AS was told to concentrate on recruitment and the training of its members, waiting for a signal from London before commencing major operations.

Figure i. A.S. 'CENTAINE'



Elsewhere attempts had been made in 1943 to unite the various resistance groups in the occupied zones. Moulin secretly sent envoys into the northern zone locating such groups as *Libération-Nord*; the OCM; *Ceux de la Résistance* (Those of the Resistance; CDLR) and *Ceux de la Libération* (Those of the Liberation; CDLL). This led to the formation of the *Comité de Coordination de Zone Nord* (Coordination Committee of the Northern Zone; CCZN) on 26 March 1943. Then, on 27 May 1943 Moulin chaired the first meeting of the *Conseil National de la Résistance* (Nation Council of the Resistance; CNR) in Paris. This session included representatives from the majority of important Resistance movements: CDLL, CDLR, FN, *Libération-Nord*, OCM, *Combat*, *Franc-Tireur* and *Libération-Sud*. It also had representatives from the pre-war political parties and trade unions.

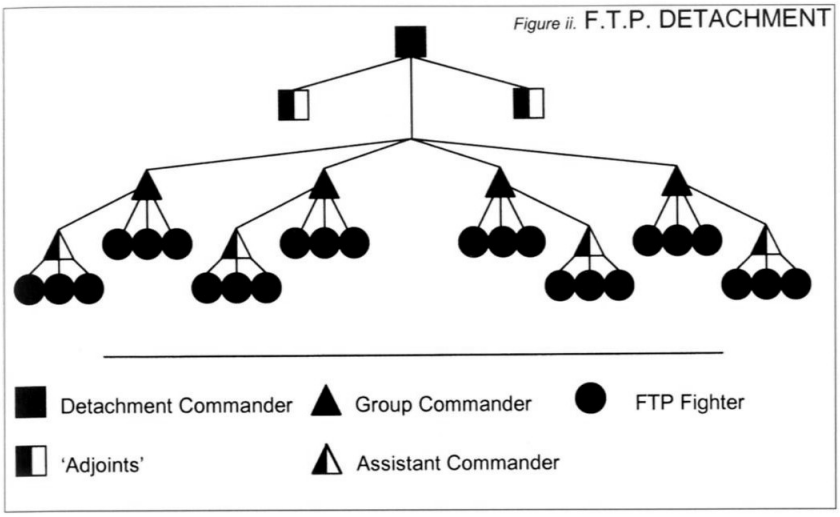
The CNR leadership soon encountered disaster. On 9 June 1943 General Delestraint was arrested by the Gestapo and sent to Dachau concentration camp. Suspecting treachery, Moulin called a meeting of AS chiefs on 21 June at Caluire near Lyons. Shortly after arriving in Lyons, Moulin received a message to meet Resistance leaders in a public garden. When he and several others arrived they found themselves surrounded and arrested by a Gestapo unit led by Klaus Barbie – the notorious 'Butcher of Lyons'. Throughout his ordeal, Moulin did not talk. Although never confirmed, it is believed Moulin was beaten into a coma and succumbed to his injuries on 8 July en route to a concentration camp. His body was sent to Paris where it was incinerated.

The FTP

Running parallel to the AS, by the end of 1943 the communist FTP had developed into a formidable partisan force operating in the northern and southern zones. Like the AS it was organized into small cells. Initially these were simple two- to three-man teams, but later the organization became much more complex (Figure ii). The basic building block of the FTP was the Combat Group, which comprised of seven men and a *chef de groupe* (group leader). For security and mobility, each group was divided into two teams of four men. The second team was commanded by an *adjoint* (assistant) to the *chef de groupe*. The members of a team or group would only assemble for an operation and would immediately disband after carrying it out. The hideouts of the individual men were kept secret from the *chef de groupe* in case he was captured.

Larger detachments could be formed by joining four combat groups together under the command of a *chef de détachement* who would be in communication with the higher echelons of the FTP. This leader would be assisted by a small staff comprising two *adjoints*, one of whom was responsible for recruitment, organization and morale and the other for intelligence gathering, the procurement and manufacture of weapons, gathering rations and health issues. When three or four detachments operated together in the same area they formed a company. This was especially the case after 1943 because of the increased recruitment of STO *réfractaires*.

In some cases, two or three companies would go on to form battalions, but this formation would only assemble just prior to action. Otherwise the FTP preferred to keep its men dispersed. A company of 100–150 men would be spread over four or five *cantonnements* (quarters)



with a maximum of 30 men in each. These *cantonnements* were sited far away enough for them not to be surrounded, but close enough for them to be mutually supporting.

Above battalion level, the FTP was organized as follows. A *Comité Militaire Régional* (Regional Military Committee; CMR) was responsible for a region comprising one, or sometimes two, *départements* of France. Several 'regions' formed an *inter-région* directed by a *Comité Militaire Inter-Régional* (Inter-Regional Military Committee; CMRI). The CMRIs were directed by a *Comité Militaire National* (National Military Committee; CMN). The wishes of the CMN were made known at local level by a sub-regional commandant (sub-regions were a group of several *inter-régions*). Operations beyond the German-held line of demarcation into the southern zone were overseen by a special delegation, the *Comité Militaire de Zone Sud* (Military Committee of the Southern Zone; CMZ).

Each of these echelons was supported by a 'triangle' of three officers. The *commissaire aux effectifs* (commissioner for manpower; CE) was principally responsible for recruitment and communication between the various groups. The *commissaire aux operations* (CO) was responsible for planning operations and training the men for combat, while the *commissaire technique* (technical commissioner; CT) was concerned with arms, intelligence and health.

To formalize membership, the FTP introduced an *engagement d'honneur* – a code of conduct for members. By signing this code, FTP members made a formal pledge to serve honourably until the complete liberation of French territory. The FTP were, the code stated, the advanced guard on French soil of the *France Combattante* (Fighting French) armies of both General de Gaulle and General Giraud. The soldiers pledged to fight with all their strength, to obey commands and show discipline, and to come to the aid of comrades in danger. They were to take an active part in recruitment; submit themselves for training and instruction; study the art of war and weapons handling; and maintain their readiness for action. They were instructed to take particular care within the city or countryside they operated in, to pass unperceived and to restrict their visits. Above all, they were to be well behaved and to show gratitude to those who assisted them.

From the security aspect, members pledged to retain absolute secrecy regarding the FTP and to resist all threats and tortures designed to make them talk about persons or operations, both previous and forthcoming. They were to avenge all crimes against 'patriots' committed by the enemy and so-called 'French' police officers in their pay. The death penalty was to be carried out immediately against informers and anyone trying to prevent this was to be seen as an accomplice and also punished.

The FTP's strategy was to strike at the enemy and then vanish. They drew their inspiration from French history, remembering how royalist Chouan rebels in Brittany had waged a guerrilla war during the Revolution and how the Spanish guerrillas had fought against Napoleon. Equally they were inspired by and took their name from the *Franc-tireur* irregulars of the Franco-Prussian War, who fought behind German lines at considerable cost. The FTP groups also benefited from the experience of those who had fought in the International Brigade in the Spanish Civil War.

In the early days, FTP groups were urban guerrillas. Their attacks were brutally efficient. For example, a grenade thrown into the back of a German lorry carrying 30 men exploded with terrible effect; a German detachment marching along the street had two grenades thrown at it; a grenade was thrown into a restaurant frequented by German officers; a German *Soldatenheim* (recuperation centre) was blown up; mines exploded under passing German convoys; trains were attacked, troops machine-gunned and hotels bombed; grenades were thrown at an SS detachment on the Champs Élysées. All these attacks meant the

Maquis in action. The figure in the foreground is about to throw a grenade while his comrades lay down covering fire. (IWM MH27379)

Germans could not walk the streets unguarded and they also showed the population that the Nazis were not the supermen they believed themselves to be. The FTP put out a rallying cry for everyone to get a German: '*Chacun son Boche*'.

The FFI command structure

The third main Resistance group, the ORA, which backed General Giraud, did not join the CNR. However, in October 1943, after an accord between generals de Gaulle and Giraud, ORA and AS joined forces. Through further negotiations an agreement was also reached with the FTP. Although disagreeing with the tactics adopted by the Gaullist groups, the FTP thought it beneficial for the Resistance to have commanders who sat alongside the Allied leadership planning the invasion. More than anything, the FTP erroneously believed this would lead to them receiving more supplies and weapons. Therefore, after 29 December 1943, AS and FTP activities were coordinated by COMAC, the acronym of the *Comité Militaire d'Action*, a three-man body that in itself was answerable to the CNR, which by that stage had become increasingly dominated by communists. However, it should be stated that in reality the FTP went its own way and should be considered as an independent group.

In February 1944, the combined forces of the Resistance became known as the *Forces Françaises de l'Intérieur* (French Forces of the Interior; FFI). On 23 March 1944, the FFI was placed under the command of General Pierre Koenig who had risen to prominence as a commander of Free French troops. Koenig was sent from Algeria to place himself and the Resistance at Eisenhower's disposal. He was also to lobby Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force (SHAEF) to have all the agencies dealing with the FFI brought under one roof – a body that would come to be known as *État Major des Forces Françaises de l'Intérieur* (General Staff, French Forces of the Interior; EMFFI).

Unfortunately for Koenig, the Anglo-Americans had no intention of revealing anything about the forthcoming invasion to the Free French. According to William Casey, an OSS officer and future CIA chief, British and American commanders at SHAEF never fully trusted the Free French or the Resistance movements, which appeared more tied up with domestic political agendas than defeating Germany. No part of the planning would rely on the Resistance and any assistance provided by it subsequent to the invasion would be treated as a bonus. Even de Gaulle was not privy to the invasion plans. He was only informed by Churchill on the evening of 4 June as a matter of protocol because Free French troops would be among the first wave sent over. De Gaulle never forgave his allies for this slight.

However, once the invasion took place and there was no longer any secrecy over its timing, on 9 June SHAEF reached an agreement – subject to Eisenhower's approval – that Koenig would assume command of the FFI, but that he would be under Eisenhower's command. In reply, the French authorities in Algeria stipulated that the FFI were now part of the French Army and were to be treated as regular soldiers. Official ranks were conferred on FFI officers. The commanders of 30 men became *sous-lieutenants*; commanders of 100 men became *lieutenants*; commanders of 300 became *capitaines*; leaders of 1,000 men and

departmental commanders became *commandants*; leaders of 2,000 men and commanders of military regions became *lieutenant-colonels*. Holders of these ranks were authorized to wear the appropriate insignia and would be recognized as legitimate military personnel by Allied troops. Unfortunately, this did little to stop the Germans from shooting them if captured. The German commander in the theatre, Gerd von Rundstedt, had put out a communiqué on 12 June declaring that FFI troops would be treated as partisans.

On 23 June Eisenhower endorsed Koenig's command. Initially Koenig was required to issue his directives to the Resistance through an organization known as the Special Force Headquarters (SFHQ), a body composed of SOE and the Special Operations (SO) branch of OSS. However, it was agreed that Koenig would gradually relieve the SFHQ of its responsibilities in connection with the French Resistance, a change that took place on 21 August. Directives were issued by the EMFFI, now in control of not just the FFI, but also the agents formerly run by the BCRA and SOE's F and RF sections. It also became responsible for a number of Allied Special Forces teams that had been working with the Resistance since D-Day.

To complement the existing BCRA/SOE operatives working in France on the eve of the invasion, uniformed Allied soldiers were parachuted in to make contact with the local maquis groups, assess their strengths and requirements and put them inside the Allied command structure. These liaison teams were codenamed 'Jedburghs'. Each 'Jed' was made up of a commander, his deputy and a radio operator. One of the officers would be French, the other American or British; the radio operator would be an NCO. In all, 300 volunteers were trained and organized into 93 teams, all of which were sent into France on or after D-Day. They were complemented by a number of heavily armed OSS Operational Groups (OGs) which also came under EMFFI command.

LIVING CLANDESTINELY

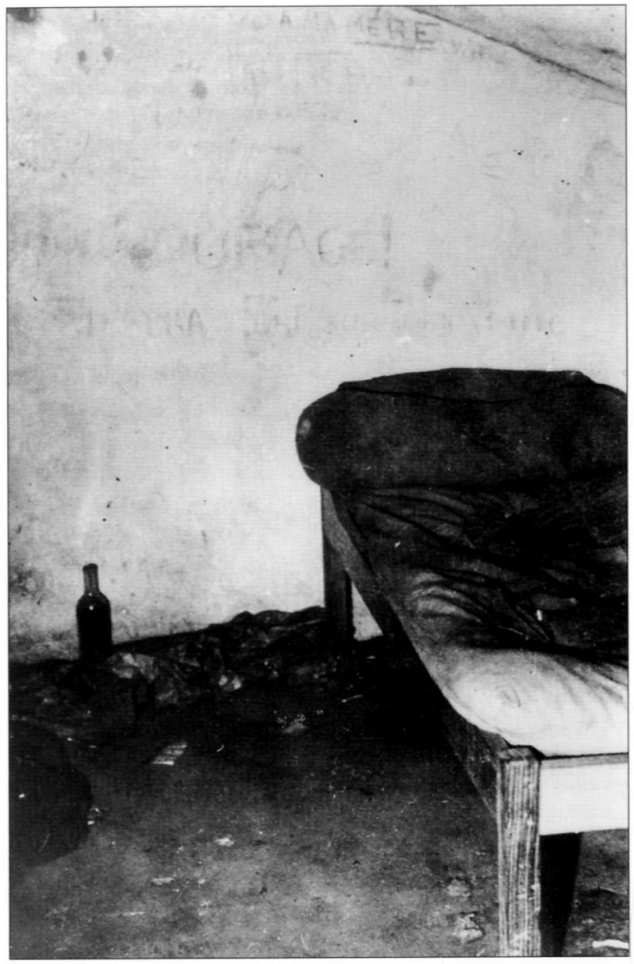
One cannot overstate the level of risk faced by all members of the Resistance, whatever their affiliation or rank. Theirs was an uncommon bravery very different from that shown by soldiers of previous wars fought by the French. Unlike their ancestors who had fought at Austerlitz and Verdun, resisters often found themselves isolated from their comrades. Instead they relied on their will-power, inventiveness, boldness, cheek and, above all, their luck.

A good resister had to melt into the background and pass unobserved. To stand out would invite suspicion and scrutiny. Silence was golden; not just under the spotlight of interrogation, but every single day. For resisters to come together, or even simply to avoid arrest and survive, elaborate precautions were called for in all facets of life. The slightest lapse of attention, the smallest detail overlooked, and the resister was in grave danger. For many the tension of this life became so unbearable that capture seemed, albeit temporarily, a relief.

Agents about to leave for France were checked to ensure their clothes did not have British labels or the wrong style of cut. The earliest

no clear idea of the information they wanted. It is believed that 40,000 Frenchmen died in French prisons that the Germans had requisitioned.

Evidence at the Nuremberg trials described an array of barbarous methods. Victims were often shackled or suspended from the ceiling and beaten or kicked until they fainted, only to be roused by a bucket of water in the face, whereupon the beating would resume. Electric shocks were administered: a wire was attached to the foot and another wire placed at different parts of the body. Some had their legs burned by a blow-torch, or were attacked by police dogs. One victim remembered being shut in a sort of coffin for hours at a time with just a few holes in the lid to breathe through. Many were lashed by ox-hide whips or were hit with hammers or other heavy objects, while others had their heads squeezed in vices. Many were subjected to the *baignoire* (bath-tub). Here the victim was forcibly submerged in a bathtub filled with freezing water and held under until at the point of drowning. At the last second he would be pulled out, questioned, abused and pushed back under until he agreed to talk. If all that failed the Germans would target the victim's family and loved ones. All but the strongest would talk once the interrogators threatened to have their fiancée or sister sent to a German army brothel.



A Gestapo cell, Bordeaux, with graffiti on the wall encouraging future inmates to take courage. Under interrogation even the toughest could expect to break some time and many chose to commit suicide before this could happen. One senior Resistance figure, Pierre Brossolette, was captured by the Gestapo, who did not realize the significance of their arrest. Brossolette had a distinctive streak of white hair, which he had dyed, but which would no doubt soon grow through. Before this could happen he jumped from a sixth-floor window in the Gestapo's Paris headquarters on the Avenue Foch. (IWM R.1758)

Women were subjected to the same ordeals and faced beatings as severe as the men. One survivor, Madame Sindemans, recounted how she was arrested in Paris on 24 February 1944 after soldiers found her carrying stolen identification cards and German work passes. 'Immediately, they handcuffed me and took me to be interrogated', she recalled. 'Getting no reply, they slapped me in the face with such force that I fell from my chair. Then they whipped me with a rubber hose, full in the face. This interrogation began at 10 o'clock in the morning and ended at 11 o'clock that night. I must tell you that I had been pregnant for three months.'

French SOE agent Odette Sansom survived months of interrogation by the Gestapo in Paris's Fresnes prison. In an interview after the war she recalled how she mentally resisted her tormentors:

> In those places the only thing one could try to keep was a certain dignity. There was nothing else. And one could have a little dignity and try to prove that one had a little spirit and, I suppose, that kept one going. When everything was too difficult, too bad, then one was inspired by so many things – people; perhaps a phrase one would remember that one had heard a long time before, or even a piece of poetry or a piece of music.

In June 1943 Odette Sansom was transported to Ravensbruck concentration camp in Germany – an ordeal she managed to survive. The conditions faced by the inmates of Nazi concentration camps need no introduction here. Members of the Resistance were classed as *Nacht und Nebel* (Night and Fog) prisoners. These were the prisoners Hitler wanted simply to disappear. Of the 200,000 French citizens deported to concentration camps, perhaps as many as 75,000 were also members of the Resistance. It is estimated that half of French inmates did not survive.

Chances to escape before deportation or execution were rare, but one episode stands out as among the most audacious jail breaks in history. A number of high-profile Resistance fighters were being held at Amiens prison and many were scheduled for execution on 20 February 1944. A plan was hatched by Dominique Ponchardier – founder member of the *Sosies* intelligence network – to get the RAF to breach the prison walls with a low-level attack, allowing the prisoners to escape and rejoin the Resistance in the build up to D-Day. Among the 700 inmates was Raymond Vivant, the sub-prefect of Abbeville who had been arrested by the Gestapo on 12 February on suspicion of Resistance activities. On the morning of 18 February, Vivant was preparing for his lunch when he heard the drone of aircraft engines followed by a loud explosion:

> I thought initially that a German plane had just crashed very close to us, and I began to delight in this when a succession of

Mealtime at the Maquis de Faugerolles (Lot et Garonne). Maquis groups such as these were dependent on local farmers for providing food and the secret services in London for sending money to pay for it. A thriving black market grew up during the war to provide for those without access to official ration cards and coupons. (IWM MH11175)

and a good pair of studded shoes. If they could lay their hands on a weapon, all the better.

Generally speaking, there is little to say on the actual appearance of maquisards in terms of uniforms. However, the following descriptions of maquis groups in 1944 are useful. SOE agent George Millar gave his first impression of the maquis on landing: 'I saw in the moonlight that some wore ordinary civilian clothes, while others were dressed in odd scraps of rags, old uniforms, and leather coats that I had learned to expect in the maquis.' Landing in the Morvan region, SAS officer Ian Wellsted gave the following description of a maquis band:

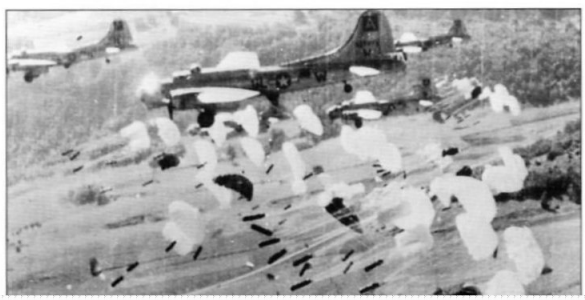
> It was hard to tell what they had been before the German labour laws threw them all together in the depths of the wild woods. Some had been shopkeepers, artisans, young sons of wealthy parents. Others were scum of the gutter and many were soldiers. Now, however, all were much the same. All wore the clothes, and many still the wooden clogs, of peasants. Some lucky ones had scraps of uniform and British battledress, but predominantly their clothes consisted of drab coloured shirts, blue overall trousers and German field boots, whose owners no doubt had ceased to require them for obvious reasons. They wore neither brassards nor regular uniform of any kind. The only distinguishable difference between the men of the Maquis and the men of the country from which they had sprung was the pistol cocked aggressively from the trouser tops, the rifle on the shoulder, the Sten on the back or the string of grenades depending from the belt.

Against these freewheeling examples, a more uniformed representation is shown in the Museum of the Order of Liberation in

Paris. This costume shows a dark green, hooded jacket of the type issued to young men on the *Chantiers de Jeunesse* (Youth Work Farms). These were part of a government programme where young Frenchmen were obliged to spend eight months in a *chantier*. Publicly it was a way of providing work and distraction for those reaching military age and, in many cases, whose fathers were absent, held prisoner in Germany. The real function of the *chantiers* was to provide 'the rudiments of discipline, hygiene and endurance' normally found in National Service. It also allowed the army to gather the statistics previously collected by recruitment bureaus. While on the *chantiers* some individuals did go on to join the maquis. Also, *chantier* depots were a good source of supplies for maquis raiding parties. With the museum figure in question, the *chantier* insignia was replaced by a Cross of Lorraine symbol. The rest of the uniform consisted of army boots, gaiters, British army trousers, leather gloves and was finished with a captured German army belt.

SUPPLY DROPS

USAAF B-17 Flying Fortresses drop supply containers to the maquis in Vercors. Normally parachutages occurred at night, so this photo gives a unique perspective on the process. (IWM EA34185)



The biggest problem facing the Resistance was supply. Although the Resistance within the French Army had begun concealing weapons in 1940, they were loath to share them. Equally, although the SOE and BCRA lobbied the British and American governments for weapons drops, very little was initially done. SHAEF's deep-seated distrust of the Resistance meant the French received very little in terms of arms and equipment through parachute drops. The French were considered less of a priority than Italian or Yugoslav partisans and some Allied leaders even feared that if the French were provided with weapons the various groups might use them against each other.

Even if weapons were made available, there was still the problem of delivery. Allied air marshals were reluctant to divert planes from

The FTP supplemented their training with a considerable number of written manuals. The first manual to appear was a brochure entitled *Manuel du Légionnaire* (Legionary Manual), which at first glance ironically passed itself off as a publication for French fascists going to fight in Russia. Another brochure explained how to use explosives and the best way of destroying railway tracks, turntables, pylons, cables and so on. Other brochures covered topics as diverse as scouting, topography and group combat methods. One was entitled *How to Fight* and advised FTP members to put feelers out to the local community and to use them as their eyes and ears. Perhaps most usefully, the FTP produced a manual showing the operation of all small arms employed by the French, British, American and German armies.

The FTP also established a training regime for its officers. The courses for this school were written by Professeur Marcel Prenant, the FTP chief-of-staff and author of many FTP training guides, including the *Manuel du Légionnaire.* In total there were eight courses:

Course 1: guerrilla warfare
Course 2: group security in base and on the march
Course 3: action against enemy stores
Course 4: action against locales occupied by the enemy
Course 5: attacking enemy troops and convoys
Course 6: group defensive combat
Course 7: offensive combat against effective resistance
Course 8: concepts of topography, etc.

A liaison officer at work studying a map. Note his Colt pistol, compass, 'FS' knife and US M1 Carbine. The object by his right forearm is a radio set. (IWM HU56019)

Towards the end of 1942 the FTP's supreme body, the CMN, issued advice to local commanders on how to conduct themselves in the run-up to an operation. It told them to prepare thoroughly and always to look to minimize damage to their men. More importantly, the note advised: 'Speak to your men; show them the importance of their mission, the grandeur of the cause they serve, raise their political comprehension and their morale, create between them a spirit of solidarity…'

Working with an FTP group, Jedburgh team member Thomas Macpherson saw this leadership style in action:

> The leader of the FTP in the Department of Lot was a very strong character who went under the name of Commissar Georges. He actually held indoctrination classes as well as his military operations and exercised a degree of almost forced recruitment among the young people of the area, threatening their families. But once he got them on board, he did operate against the Germans.

As a rule, the scope of training was limited by the knowledge of the instructor, the availability of weapons and ammunition and the need for secrecy. Live-firing

practise was rare – although when it did take place, supply containers were often used as targets because they were about the same size as a man.

Much of the training given to the Resistance in the run-up to D-Day came from SOE agents who had been rigorously trained in Britain. Without this training the Resistance would have had little idea as to how to safely use the equipment parachuted to them. SOE agent Roger Millar once went to a cellar where explosives were being prepared and recorded his verdict of the untutored bomb makers he found there:

> If the instructors from the training schools in England could have seen those Frenchmen making up charges the cellar would have looked to them like Dante's Inferno. Every conceivable school 'don't' was being done.

RESISTANCE TACTICS

While the bulk of the AS was in hiding waiting for D-Day, its direct-action groups were very much at work. In the early days, much of their effort was directed at punishing collaborators. Lists of the collaborators' names were published and there was talk of one group branding the more notorious collaborators with a swastika insignia. Approaching D-Day the direct action came in two distinct categories:

a) Slowing or stopping production of industry destined for German use and the sabotage of transport and lines of communication (rail, canals, roads, electric lines)
b) Attacking the forces of occupation, the Gestapo and their agents

A member of the Resistance sets an explosive charge on a railway line. Saboteurs would often use grenades as anti-tamper devices when planting explosives on a track. The grenade would be

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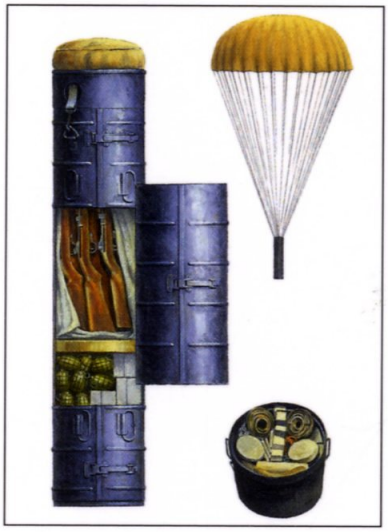

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